

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENDING 01228 031006Z

12
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 L-03 SP-02 INR-07 SS-15 /047 W
----- 112876

R 030900Z AUG 76
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2506
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 1 2 2 8

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CSCE, US, UR
SUBJECT: RENTAL OF CARS BY SOVIETS IN U.S.

REF: STATE 185345

1. WE INFORMED BY INTOURIST PERSONNEL THAT FOREIGN BUSSINESSMEN IN LENINGRAD CAN RENT UNCHAUFFEURED AUTOS FROM INTOURIST TRANSPORT BUREAU AT ADMIRALTEYSKIY PROSPEKT NO. 8. BUREAU HAS APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-FIVE SUCH VEHICLES FOR HIRE. COSTS, ALL PAYABLE IN HARD CURRENCY AT THE OFFICIAL RATE, ARE AS FOLLOWS: "VOLGA", 1-10 DAYS, 7.90 RUBLES PER DAY AND .08 KOPECKS PER KILOMETER; 11-20 DAYS 7.30 RUBLES/DAY AND .08 KOPECKS/KM. PRICES FOR "ZHIGULI" SOMEWHAT LOWER (E.G. "ZHIGULI" 1-10 DAYS, 5.60 RUBLES/DAY AND .05 KOPECKS/KILOMETER). ONLY REQUIREMENTS FOR RENTAL ARE PASSPORT, DRIVER'S LICENSE, AND HARD CURRENCY OR MAJOR CREDIT CARD.

2. CATCH-22 IS THAT CARS ARE IN LIMITED SUPPLY AND MAY NOT ALWAYS BE READILY AVAILABLE. INTOURIST TELLS US THAT IT DOES NOT PLAN TO INCREASE ITS SMALL FLEET OF CARS AND STRESSES NEED TO RESERVE VEHICLES IN ADVANCE. MOREOVER, IT FOLLOWS DE FACTO POLICY OF NOT PUBLICIZING LOCALLY CAR RENTAL POSSIBILITIES. WHILE BUREAU EXISTS, VISITORS ARE NOT NORMALLY TOLD ABOUT IT BUT ARE INSTEAD STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO HIRE CHAUFFEUR DRIVEN CARS PROVIDED BY THEIR INTOURIST HOTEL SERVICE BUREAU.

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3. IN ADDITION, CARS, OF COURSE, CAN ONLY BE FREELY DRIVEN WITHIN

30 KILOMETER ZONE TO WHICH FOREIGNERS ARE RESTRICTED -- WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS MAINLY PROVIDING ACCESS TO RECREATION OR VERY POPULAR TOURIST AREAS -- BY SOVIET REGULATIONS. TRAVEL BEYOND 30 KILOMETER ZONE IS POSSIBILITY BUT CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY ON PETITION TO OVIR THROUGH BUSINESSMAN'S SPONSORING FACTORY OR ORGANIZATION. LIKELIHOOD OF SUCH APPROVAL HERE SUBJECT TO MANY AND DIVERSE FACTORS AND IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT.

4. ON BALANCE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE MUCH ADDITIONAL WHICH COULD BE GAINED AT THIS POINT BY UNCHAUFFEURED CARS, UNLESS SUCH AN AGREEMENT WERE TO GET INTO BROADER SUBJECT OF APPLICATION TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON BUSINESSMEN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEASES, AUTOMOBILES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LENING01228
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760298-0736
From: LENINGRAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760893/aaaaddnj.tel
Line Count: 74
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 76 STATE 185345
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <01 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RENTAL OF CARS BY SOVIETS IN U.S.
TAGS: PFOR, US, UR, CSCE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006